

NORTHERN
ARCHITECTURAL ASSOCIATION.

INSTITUTED 1858.

ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY THE PRESIDENT,

MR. JOSEPH OSWALD, F.R.I.B.A.,
(1850-1930)

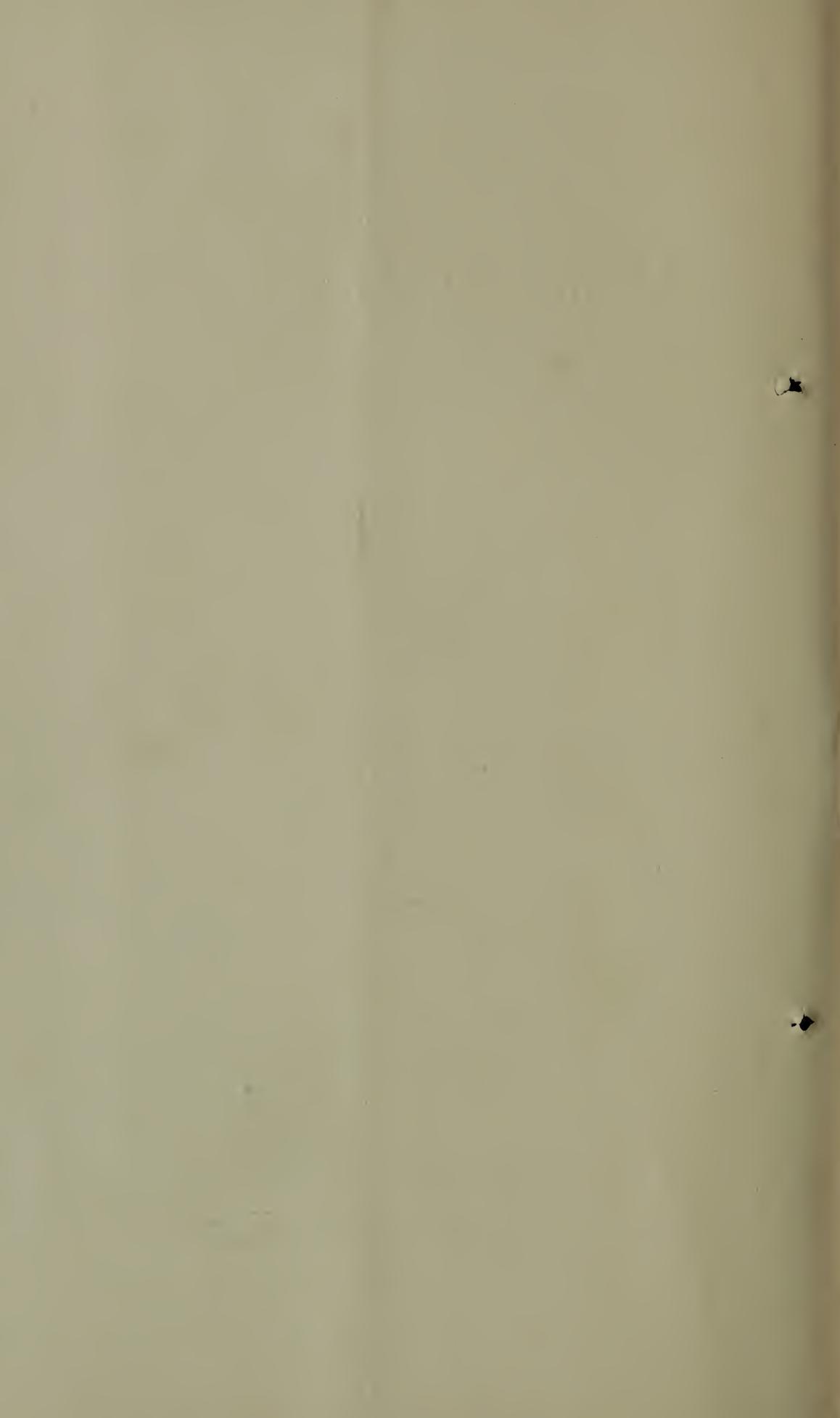
AT THE OPENING MEETING OF THE WINTER SESSION,

NOVEMBER 13TH, 1895.

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NORTHERN ARCHITECTURAL ASSOCIATION.

Address delivered by the President, Mr. JOSEPH OSWALD, F.R.I.B.A., at the opening of the Winter Session, November 13th, 1895.

Introductory.

As at present constituted, I apprehend the Association cannot bestow upon any one of its members higher distinction than to elect him for two consecutive years its President. As the latest recipient of that honour I desire to express my thanks for and appreciation of it.

There is, or ought to be, no post of privilege without its attendant duties and responsibilities, and one of these devolving on me, by virtue of my office, is to inaugurate, to-night, our Annual Winter Session.

At anniversaries of this kind one is naturally disposed to review the past and scan the future; and it is gratifying to note that both prospect and retrospect are alike encouraging to those who have at heart the welfare of our Association.

Retrospective.

Our last Winter Session was exceedingly successful, and the Outdoor Meetings held during the past Summer have been numerous, well attended, and varied in character.

We commenced by visiting the ancient churches of Billingham and Norton, near Stockton-on-Tees, and afterwards held an evening Conference in that town, with several of the architects practising there, the object being to let them know and enlist their sympathies in the objects and work of this Association. Practitioners in the smaller towns are apt to feel cut off from their professional brethren in larger centres, and to minimise that unpleasant feeling anything that lies in the power of this Association should, within the Province assigned to it, be willingly and promptly done. With the same object, on a more extended scale, I think it would be well if the Royal Institute of British Architects, with which we are allied, could see its way to hold an occasional meeting in one or other of the provincial centres, and I am glad to note that it is on the carpet to hold such a meeting in Manchester during the coming Spring. I hope this may prove the forerunner of many similar provincial excursions of the Institute, and that in no far distant year this Association may be able to invite and welcome to this City a representative gathering of British architects.

Reverting to our Summer Meetings, the next was held nearer home, at Jarrow and South Shields; when we visited not only, in

Jarrow Church, one of the most ancient edifices in the Kingdom, once the home of the Father of British History, but a series of interesting modern works by Mr. CRAWFORD HICK, Messrs. HICKS & CHARLEWOOD, Mr. J. J. STEVENSON, and Mr. HENRY GRIEVES.

Later in the year, we had an opportunity of viewing, in Sir ANDREW NOBLE's new Tennis Court at Jesmond, a building unique in the North of England, and of a class rare in this country, the work of our Vice-President, Mr. RICH. The neighbouring mansion, Jesmond Dene House, which we also saw through, is an interesting example of the gradual accretion of a large house round the nucleus of an older and smaller one, exhibiting the skill in planning and the picturesque of Mr. NORMAN SHAW.

The Annual Excursion, held in July, had for its venue another of that Master's works, the mansion house at Chesters, near Chollerford, the seat of the since deceased and much-regretted High Sheriff of Northumberland, Mr. N. G. CLAYTON. In the Park there are situated the excavated remains of Cilurnum, one of the most interesting relics extant of the Roman occupation of Britain ; so that members were brought face to face with examples of the Art in which we are chiefly interested, separated, as to date, by an interval of no less than seventeen centuries.

Later on, Wallsend was visited to inspect the gigantic work-sheds erected by our member, Mr. CAWS, for the shipbuilding firm of Messrs. SWAN and HUNTER, under cover of which vessels of large size can be constructed, and the workmen engaged thereon materially protected from inclement weather.

Lastly, we visited Sunderland to view the ancient Church of Monkwearmouth, sister-edifice to that of Jarrow, besides modern works of diverse character, by Messrs. HICKS and CHARLEWOOD, Messrs. OLIVER and LEESON, Mr. CAWS, Mr. HODGSON FOWLER, and Mr. J. W. DONALD.

To the architects mentioned, to the clergy of the churches, and the proprietors of the other buildings visited, we are deeply indebted for the facilities given for these meetings.

Growth of Association.

The opportunities afforded by this Association for such visits to ancient and modern typical works, made in company with those who are best able to describe and appreciate them ; together with our Winter Sessional Meetings, at which valuable papers are read and discussed ; and our Library steadily growing in importance ; naturally attract to our ranks an increasing number of members. I note that our present strength is 140, being 14 more than a year ago. The nett increment is made up of 3 Members, 8 Associates, and 3 Students—the number of the respective classes being now 45 Members, 57 Associates, and 38 Students, and there are further nominations to be made to-night. Our Hon. Librarian informs me that the Library is being satisfactorily made use of, and that about 30 volumes have been added to it during the past year, including the "Dictionary of Architecture" of the Architectural Publication

Society, the gift of Mr. THOMAS OLIVER, our first Hon. Secretary and at present our only Hon. Member.

The Association continues to offer, bi-annually, prizes to Students and the younger Associates; for measured drawings and sketches from old work, done during the summer months, and for designs and other testimonies of study more adapted for winter exercise. The number who have latterly competed for these prizes is satisfactory in the former class of work, but we would like to see the latter class engage greater attention. Both classes are of equal importance.

External Relationships of Association.

It must not be overlooked, however, that our Association has within the scope of its operations affairs other than those I have yet referred to. Those may, perhaps, be termed "internal," as affecting only, or chiefly, its members, old and young. But there are matters which may be called "external," as they affect the relationships between our profession and the public in general, or sections of it, such as the various building trades, in particular. As an instance of this may be noted an incident in the past year. An application was made to your Council for advice by the Master Builders' Association, in connection with a point of difficulty that had arisen in consequence of a feeling on the part of their joiners that work was occasionally done in buildings by cabinetmakers, which the former trade considered more properly within their own province. Definition being proverbially the grave of argument, it was suggested that an attempt should be made to define the line of demarcation between the work of the respective trades mentioned. Such a task is, however, difficult. Overlapping will and must take place occasionally, not only in these but in other branches of the crafts engaged in building operations; and the exercise of mutual forbearance, tact, and good feeling, is the best policy in the interest of all workers and of the public, at whose will and for whose convenience and ultimate benefit all professions and crafts can only hope to exist.

It is a trite saying that history repeats itself. I was much interested lately to find, while glancing over some records of the ancient Incorporated Companies of Newcastle-on-Tyne, that as long ago as 1579, similar difficulties had existed. It was then made one of the rules of the House Carpenters' Company that there should be annually elected three wardens, two carpenters and one joiner; that "the joiners should work at the sealing of houses within, the making 'dorments and windows,' 'drawn tables of framework and tables with turnposts,' 'buffet-stools,' 'forms,' 'cupboards,' 'almeries,' 'pressers,' 'chairs, and sconces of framework,' 'casements,' 'trellising of windows,' 'butties of framed-work,' 'framed chists,' and all others pinned with wood; 'as also every other kind of joiner's work.' That the two trades should occupy in common the making of butties, or any other kind of work with 'sealing linck,' i.e., one board grown in another and nailed with iron nails; 'chists for corpses, and all other chists not pinned with wood;,' 'removing of beds, cupboards, and draw-tables, together with making of doors and

windows mulder work." And I also find that ten years later, in 1589, the joiners separated themselves from the house carpenters and constituted a fellowship, or Company, of themselves; and that much later, in 1737, the two Companies "agreed upon a schedule of the sorts of work peculiarly belonging to each, and also of the several sorts of work in common which both might execute without distinction."

In searching these records of the old Freemen of our town, I find that in addition to the Companies I have mentioned there were also the following connected with Buildings, viz.:—Bricklayers and Plasterers; Masons; Slaters; Smiths; Plumbers, Pewterers, and Glaziers; and Upholsterers, Tinplate Workers, and Stationers: the last a curious combination, having amongst its rules one that they should not interfere with each other's callings.

The Apprenticeship System in Building Trades.

One thing most noteworthy is that, in each and every Company, stringent regulations were in force as to the taking and training of apprentices; the tendency in those days being apparently to excess in the number of them, calling for restrictive measures. In concluding my address to you last year, I ventured to call urgent attention to the tendency, in our own times, towards the opposite extreme. I feel sure that from no other cause have the building trades in this country suffered so much, during the last quarter of a century, as from this.

It is, for obvious reasons, difficult for a private individual to obtain trustworthy statistics as to any particular district in this respect; but it is certainly within the experience of all that the general standard of work has been, and is being, lowered in consequence of the decay of the old system of apprenticeship, and the absence as yet of any efficient substitute for it.

It is within your recollection that, only a month ago, the newly-formed National Association of Master House Painters of England and Wales, held its Annual Meeting in our City; and it was refreshing to notice, in perusing accounts of its proceedings, that one of the objects most prominently set before its members was the revival of the apprenticeship system in that particular handicraft. May their efforts in this direction be rewarded with success.

Though I have not attempted to furnish you with authentic particulars relative to this subject gleaned from our own district, I wish to bring under your notice an elaborate report upon it, prepared under the auspices of the Technical Education Board of the London County Council, and published in the October number of their *Gazette*. From it we learn the appalling fact that, taking the building trades in London as a whole, estimated to employ 12,000 men in all, including labourers, there are only about 80 apprentices! Four firms with a total staff of 1,000, had not one apprentice among them!

It would occupy too much time to quote at length from this Report, but, in detail, it purports to be the result of information derived from 41 out of 90 firms applied to. Twenty-two of these firms were general builders, and the remainder were firms following one only of the separate trades connected with building. Five firms of bricklayers had only 12 apprentices among them; five firms of masons had 14 apprentices; while nine firms of joiners had 34 apprentices, being a far larger proportion than in any other trade.

Whence then, we naturally ask, does London draw its supply of artisans? The Report supplies the answer. First of all, there is a class which may be called "learners"—143 were employed amongst the 41 firms referred to. These learners are not legally bound; and can, therefore, be instantly dismissed for misconduct, or if their services are not for the time being necessary to the employer. It may be surmised, also, that as soon as the learner imagines he has "picked up" sufficient of his trade to enable him to pass muster as a qualified journeyman elsewhere, he will not be slow to avail himself of his liberty. Such an one is hardly likely ultimately to attain a high standard of excellence. Secondly, the London building trades are being continually reinforced by the influx of journeymen from the country. The provinces, in fact, have to train men for the London market. This being so, it is evident that to cope with such a demand, the provinces ought to train a number of men greatly in excess of their own requirements. But this, I take it, is not the case; the result being that the provinces are liable to become depleted of the best class of workmen.

The same causes that lead to the dearth of apprentices in London apply in a modified degree to the provinces, and especially to the more populous provincial centres like our own Tyneside. These causes, as suggested by the Report under consideration, are (1st) the engrossing nature of the commercial side of modern business; (2nd) the extensive use of machinery; (3rd) the necessity of utilising all available space for securing the maximum productive power; (4th) the reluctance of employers to undertake moral responsibilities which cannot properly be discharged without personal supervision of the individual; and the difficulty of enforcing discipline without an appeal to the law, which, in the present state of public opinion upon the so-called liberty of the subject, is practically futile.

Technical Schools.

Under these circumstances, the working of the various schemes for Technical Education promoted by County Councils and other bodies throughout the country, deserves to be watched with the closest interest. Everything possible should be done to promote the success of such endeavours; but, says the Report, "There exists a deep-rooted belief in apprenticeship as being the best means by which a boy can learn his trade and eventually secure good wages, for it was often acknowledged that only those men who have served as apprentices are able to practise the trade in its higher branches."

One firm criticises technical classes, as at present carried on, thus :—“The instruction does not form a satisfactory substitute for apprenticeship. It is too flimsy and too much in the nature of an exercise or recreation. There is not the reality about it such as is obtained in the shop, or on the job. Moreover, there are not the facilities for thorough practical teaching. The instructors are rarely good sound practical men, such as are secured as builders’ foremen”; but such classes “can supplement the apprenticeship, and greatly assist by giving instruction in subjects which cannot be imparted in the shops.”

The Report concludes by suggesting (1) that the Royal Institute of British Architects should take the question up, and use its influence with builders to consider the matter seriously; (2) that the Trade Unions should issue certificates to their members who have served proper apprenticeships and passed some sort of qualifying examination (somewhat on the lines of the certificates of registration issued by the Plumbers’ Company); (3) the dissemination of good technical literature among young men in the building trades.

To my mind, the solution of the difficulty lies largely in the hands of the Trade Unions. These powerful organizations have hitherto dealt chiefly with the financial relationships between employers and employed; but, I trust, in this so-called enlightened age, the equally important relationship between the workman and the general public will be recognised by these Unions. The safety and requirements of the public call for the maintenance of a high standard of efficiency in the work done for it, and it is the duty, and ought to be the pride, of the artizan so to do his work in the world that the labourer shall be verily and indeed worthy of his hire. In the long run, other theories notwithstanding, the best article must command the highest price, and, therefore, it is the true interest and policy of the producer to supply it.

Local Architects a century ago and since.

And now let us turn for a few minutes to the relationship between our own profession and the public. As at present exercised, ours must be deemed a modern profession. A hundred years ago, in our town, it scarcely existed. One local historian, writing in 1826, tells us that in 1782, “an opulent architect” (*mirabile dictu*) became the owner of a house which had long been one of the sights of Newcastle. It stood on the site of Grey Street, in front of the block now occupied by LAMBTON’s Bank, but facing towards Pilgrim Street. This “opulent architect” was a certain GEORGE ANDERSON, and he rechristened the house “Anderson Place.” His son was the donor of the great bell which hung, until four years ago, in S. Nicholas’ Steeple, and was called, after him, “the Major.” But this “opulent architect,” we are told by another local historian, was a builder; and there is no doubt that the “architects” of a hundred years ago, in provincial towns, were not only the designers but the actual constructors of their buildings. There was, in Newcastle, such an one named NEWTON, who built Charlotte Square, and lived there. He

was the designer of the old Assembly Rooms (1774) and of St. Ann's Church (1768). He died previous to the commencement of this century. There were also the Messrs. STOKOE, father and son, who designed and built the Moot Hall (1810-12), as well as Elswick Hall, Newcastle. And there was DAVID STEPHENSON, who laid out Mosley Street and Dean Street in Newcastle, and Church Street in Gateshead ; who designed the Theatre which stood where the lower end of Grey Street now unites with Mosley Street; and who also won in competition and superintended the building of All Saints' Church (1786-96) ; an admirable composition, the steeple especially being well worthy of careful study, and rivalling, I think, many of those which WREN, HAWKSMOOR, and GIBBS erected in the metropolis. He also designed the column erected at Alnwick in 1816, as a testimonial to the then Duke of Northumberland from his tenantry. Our Association may deem itself intimately connected with STEPHENSON (who died in 1819), because our first President, JOHN DOBSON, was his pupil. In the address which Mr. DOBSON delivered at the first formal meeting of this Association, on April 19th, 1859, he gave some interesting particulars of his master, with whom he completed his articles in 1809 ; and, thereafter, established himself as the first local exclusively professional architect, all of his predecessors having, more or less, associated themselves with the actual business of a builder. At that time, Mr. DOBSON, in Northumberland, and Mr. BONOMI, in Durham, were the only such architects between York and Edinburgh ; Mr. BONOMI also acting as County Surveyor for Durham. Of course, professional architects had received commissions in these northern parts before, but they came from London. For instance, Sir JOHN VANBRUGH, who designed Seaton Delaval Hall ; and PAYNE, who designed the mansions at Gosforth, Belford, Axwell, and Bywell. And of local birth, though not practice, may be mentioned LANCELOT BROWN, ("Capability BROWN," as he was called,) who lived between 1716 and 1783, and as a landscape gardener and architect, enjoyed a considerable London reputation for thirty years.

Contemporary with Mr. DOBSON were JOHN and BENJAMIN GREEN, father and son ; who, between them, designed the Grey Column, the present Theatre Royal, the Literary and Philosophical Institution, and St. Mary's Church, Rye Hill, in Newcastle ; the Monument to Lord Durham, on Pensher Hill ; the picturesque Station Buildings on the railway between Newcastle and Berwick ; the Suspension Bridge at Scotswood ; and the timber viaducts which have now been superseded by iron bridges across the Ouseburn and Willington Dene, on the railway between Newcastle and Tynemouth.

The Work of Modern Architects.

It is surprising to note how, during the present century, the number of professional architects has multiplied, and that they all can find employment. They exist in accordance with a public demand, and what the public requires nowadays in the architect is, not an artist only or chiefly, but a man of business. As practising architects, we are expected to know much about, and be responsible

for, many things, which as youthful students we would have regarded with repugnance. Most of us looked forward, no doubt, to spend our future in the delightful task of giving reins to fancy in the design of monumental edifices destined to hand down our names with honour to posterity. Alas! we have by the inexorable laws of exchange, been forced to clip our wings and descend to lesser ambitions. But, as GEORGE HERBERT sings :—

“Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws,
Makes that and the action fine,”

and there is a satisfaction in bringing mental abilities to bear upon whatever fate has placed in our way. We cannot all be artists; we cannot all be specialists; we cannot all select the work we would like to do best; but we can all, even as men of business, infuse into our work some of that spirit which inspired our youthful dreams, besides taking care that matters which the public deem much more important do not suffer in our hands. As designers, we may, I think, take a lesson from the way in which Mr. PHIL. MAY, the leading black-and-white humorist of the day, is said to work. It is reported that he first makes a very elaborate drawing of his subject, and afterwards eliminates every line that does not tell, every line that is not requisite for the story he has to convey. To apply this to ourselves, it appears to me that many of our designs would not suffer by a similar process. We are apt to sit at our boards and work up our elevations, so as to make the drawing itself effective; forgetting, possibly, that the drawing is only a means to an end, and that the building itself is the object where effectiveness is needed. Elaborate detail in the drawing may be lost in the building itself; whereas, if we use our indiarubber and obliterate the unnecessary, we will probably insure that the proportion of the various parts of our buildings shall be good, and in just relation to each other. Without these attributes no building, even if covered with ornament, can be satisfactory. Carved ornament is frequently placed where it cannot be seen to advantage. It was put on the drawing, no doubt, to make that look pretty, but in execution it is far from the eye, and in such positions as invite a speedy veil of soot and dirt. In my address last year, I ventured just to touch upon this topic, under the head of “Restraint in Design.” It was, under the title of “The Value of Simplicity in Architecture,” admirably dealt with at a meeting of the R.I.B.A., in February last, when excellent papers were read by the President and others.

The exigencies of modern commerce tend to give our street fronts the appearance of glass tanks in an unsuccessful Aquarium, that has gone into liquidation of another sort, the water being run off and the space inside devoted to the display of other than marine curiosities. Only a few years ago, one of our members remarked to me that, in street buildings where there are shops, Architecture began at the first floor, but, were he now to be reminded of that criticism, he would be inclined to say that Architecture had gone up another storey. I actually saw, not long ago, in a North of England town, a place of business three storeys, I think, in height,

where the entire frontage, from pavement to eaves, consisted wholly of sheets of plate-glass in wooden frames. And so in towns whose bye-laws require even the out-offices in the back yards of houses to be constructed with walls of brick "not less than 9 inches thick," we may find buildings in the principal streets whose front "walls" are simply of glass $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thick for ninety-nine per cent. of their superficies. Let but one of these catch fire, and woe betide the inmates, the passers by, or the firemen !

Much of the work of the general practitioner of architecture, as now developed, is technically that of a surveyor : an honourable title, although somewhat out of fashion except in legal phraseology. The learned President of the R.I.B.A. is Surveyor to the fabric of St. Paul's Cathedral, and proud of his office. Such work may comprise valuations ; negotiations as to ancient lights, party walls, and easements generally ; arbitrations upon all questions connected with land or buildings ; the investigation of failures in construction ; settlements from subsidence of the strata beneath, or other causes ; the laying out of building estates ; sanitary science ; and other matters too numerous to mention. On all of them it behoves us, as nineteenth century architects and men of business, to keep ourselves up to date, to be masters of the jurisprudence of building, and to be well versed in the latest productions of the human mind and hand applicable to buildings. The introduction of electricity, for instance, in so many forms in modern structures, calls for careful study.

I could wish that the Papers from time to time read before this Association were sometimes of a more practical nature than they usually are. Some years ago, our then Secretary compiled a list of suggestive titles for such Papers ; but, so far as I recollect, only one member has as yet responded. The Institution of Civil Engineers annually publishes a list of subjects of professional interest, and invites original communications thereon, awarding from the funds at its disposal premiums or prizes in acknowledgement of such as are deemed of superior merit. I think the R.I.B.A. and the Allied Societies might follow this example with advantage ; at present, the Institute prescribes annually the subject of an Essay, and awards substantial recognition to the best received, but I think a greater range of subjects and less abstract ones would lead to more interesting results.

Contemporary Criticism.

I am often struck by the absence of anything like intelligent criticism of modern architectural works in the contemporary press. Let but a wealthy man build a church or a benevolent institution of any kind at his own cost, and even if it be a travesty of architecture it will be hailed by the press of the district as a masterpiece. This is the more remarkable when we consider that current politics, national or municipal, are subject to scathing criticism day by day ; that literary productions of all kinds are reviewed without reserve ; that the drama and the music of the hour, in the Metropolis at least, are reported on without fear or favour ; and that the work of the painter, of whatever school, is subject to continual comment. But when we

come to Architecture, the newspaper press generally contents itself with an evidently inspired general description, in which superlative and superfluous adjectives abound ; prominence of course being given to the names and addresses of those who have in any way contributed to the result. In fact, the whole thing smacks of the advertisement. Lately, I read an account of a municipal building which stated that the “*architection*” (*sic*) was placed in the hands of the Borough Engineer. Now I cannot help thinking that genuine criticism by competent writers, widely disseminated in the newspaper press, would go far to establish a healthier tone in our National Architecture, notwithstanding that, in our art, individual taste must always be an important factor, and “*De gustibus non disputandum.*”

The Competition System.

I have mentioned, incidentally, that competitions were in vogue a hundred years ago, and that All Saints' Church in this town was the outcome of one at that time : and I could adduce several other instances almost as early. The competition system has undoubtedly “come to stay” in our midst. Like the poor it is always with us. “There is nothing,” said the President of the Institute, a fortnight ago, “in other liberal professions at all analogous to our architectural competitions, and they certainly do not raise architects in public estimation.” I suppose that everything that may, can, or should be said or written upon the subject, has been listened to and read over and over again, and I would have refrained from mentioning it to-night, save that no Presidential Address to an Architectural Association appears complete without some reference to it. The evils of the system exist, but can be ameliorated. Much has been done by the Institute and the Allied Societies in that direction already, but more remains behind. One condition continually met with in the terms of competitions is, that the promoters shall be at liberty to discard the successful architect either without remuneration altogether, or in some cases with remuneration totally inadequate, unless he finds a third party able and willing to carry out his design for a certain sum stipulated by the promoters. This sum is generally absurdly small when measured by their requirements of space accommodation and materials. One would suppose that such promoters (shrewd commercial men, generally, too) believed that the architect was in possession of the powers of a despot or magician who could control the markets, and who could dictate to labour and capital his own terms, or rather the terms of the promoters. The same men, assembled together as a municipal or county corporation, would probably vote unhesitatingly for the maintenance of a certain minimum standard of wages upon their works.

Now, it stands to reason that, in a building of given area and height, of certain materials and contents, the power of the Architect over its cost on the side of economy is limited in the extreme. And to ask him to stake his commission against the chance of a reliable tender being at a certain moment obtainable at a certain low price, is simply to ask him to become a party to a betting transaction,

which his employers, often leading lights in religious and charitable schemes, would recoil from in horror if called by that name. As all respectable competitions are now conducted under the advice of professional assessors, who are competent to advise the promoters upon the question of probable cost, I think competing architects should make a firm and united stand against a condition so manifestly unfair as that I am now referring to, by absolutely refusing to be bound by it from the very outset. No doubt promoters insert such a clause to protect themselves against certain responsibilities, not necessarily referable to the architects, and that their moral sense generally steps in, even at the eleventh hour, to guard architects against grossly unfair treatment. But the fact should not be overlooked that promoters are generally collective bodies, and it is a well known fact, albeit a deplorable one, that a number of men gathered together round a table will collectively suffer things to be done in their name which each of them, as an individual, would be ashamed of doing himself.

An instance of this kind has occurred recently, in connection with the competition for new County Buildings at Durham. This Association and the R.I.B.A. have both respectfully protested against the course pursued in that case. It appears, however, from a perusal of the conditions, that the County Council are legally "within their rights." Legal rights, however, are often moral wrongs. When the Durham County Council agreed to appoint, and did appoint, a competent Architect as assessor to assist them in selecting the best design, it seemed to go without saying that, except under very extraordinary circumstances indeed, they would be guided by the advice they themselves sought and expended the ratepayers' money upon obtaining.

If a man be ill he calls in a doctor, who may prescribe cod liver oil when the patient would prefer champagne; but if the patient fail to take the advice given the consequences are on his own head. If in litigation a man acts contrary to his solicitor's or counsel's advice he alone may suffer. But in the case of Architectural Competitions when the expert's advice is rejected, the evil results are borne, primarily, by the poor competitors who have given weeks, it may be months, of anxious thought and hard work to the problem which the promoters will, light-heartedly, solve for themselves, and in their own way, in a few hours; and, like Pilate, wash their hands of moral responsibility to the men they have injured, under the cover of a saving clause in the conditions. A nobleman, deservedly respected by us all, stigmatised the agitation against the Durham scandal as "a mere professional squabble," clearly showing that for once he failed to grasp the principle at stake. I have never known a protest so free from the suspicion of personal taint. So far as I can learn, very few local architects competed; and, so far as I have heard, no blame is attributed to the victors by the vanquished. The different architects, selected by the Assessor and the Council respectively, are all alike Associates of the Institute, and the latter are members of our own Association. As such, we would be naturally proud to congratulate them on well-earned success.

Such cases will continue to occur, so long as competing architects are innocent enough to assume absolute good faith on the part of the promoters of competitions. The only remedy, to my mind, is for every architect proposing to enter a competition to satisfy himself, from a careful perusal of the conditions, reading critically between the lines, that the suggestions of the Institute for the Conduct of Competitions are fully and literally complied with; otherwise should he compete, he may, when too late, appeal in vain to a conscience non-existent in a body without material substance to suffer pain, or immortal soul to need salvation. Such competitors must lay their account to bear

“The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes.”

It is childish to complain that the Institute or the local Society “never does anything,” when the competitors themselves have, by the implied acceptance of improper conditions, tied their own hands, and also those of the representative bodies who might otherwise fight their case with some chance of success.

Conclusion.

Let us dismiss an unpleasant topic and turn to a more congenial one. Our alliance with the Institute, and our representation on its Council, keep us ever more and more in touch with our Metropolitan brethren, and through them with those constituting the 15 allied Societies covering the United Kingdom. For several years past selections from the drawings submitted for the Studentships and Prizes in the gift of the Institute have been regularly sent down for exhibition to our members and the public. Yesterday and to-day we have held in this City one of the Preliminary Examinations in Architecture established by the Institute. In 1893 we conducted here a Qualifying Examination for the Associateship of the Institute, and we hope that, in June next, other Examinations (Intermediate or Final) may be held in this City. The convenience to provincial candidates of examinations held in local centres is very great. The fatigue of a long journey at a critical time is saved; the outlay and possible discomfort inseparable from several days’ sojourn in London is rendered unnecessary; and, perhaps more important than these, the dislocation of habit attending an absence from home is avoided, and the excitement, so apt to accompany an examination to the prejudice of a candidate’s success, is reduced to a minimum, when it is held amid familiar scenes and faces.

In conclusion, I thank you for the kind attention accorded to my too lengthy and withal fragmentary remarks, and trust, while not hesitating to criticise them, you will at the same time regard what I have said in the light of a friendly monologue, rather than a studied dissertation in which every word and phrase has been pondered over ere set down. My aim has been not to dogmatise, but to arouse discussion and the free interchange of thought and opinion upon matters affecting the Service of the Community, and the Adornment of its Surroundings. “*Usui Civium Decoris Urbium.*”

JOSEPH OSWALD.

